

American

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Secretary Clinton, EU's Ashton Say Iran Must Take Nuclear Talks Seriously

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States and the European Union called on Iran to drop its preconditions and agree to serious talks on its nuclear program and to start addressing the international community's concerns that its civilian nuclear program is being used as a cover for the development of nuclear weapons.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met in Washington May 17 with Catherine Ashton, the European Union high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, and said their discussions had included the joint efforts of France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, China and the United States — collectively known as the P5+1 — to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

"We have been clear and united, under Cathy Ashton's leadership ... that Iran has to meet its international obligations and negotiate seriously on the nuclear issue," Clinton said.

U.S. officials have said the previous meetings between Iran and the P5+1 to discuss its nuclear program were disappointing.

During talks in Geneva in October 2009, the P5+1 proposed a deal that would have provided Iran's Tehran Research Reactor with enriched uranium fuel and would have required that the enrichment be done in another country to ensure that uranium would not be enriched to a level that could be used for nuclear weapons.

Iran ultimately rejected the offer, and has since declared that it is enriching its own uranium fuel supplies.

Following a second meeting that was held in Istanbul in January 2011, the P5+1 issued a joint statement saying that "it was not possible to reach any substantive result" from the talks.

"We came to Geneva and to Istanbul with a constructive spirit and proposed in Istanbul several practical ideas aimed at building confidence and to facilitate the engagement of a constructive dialogue with Iran on the basis of reciprocity and step-by-step approach. We look to Iran to engage in future in a similarly constructive spirit," the statement said.

On May 10, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Saeed Jalili, sent Ashton a letter concerning the possibility of additional talks. Clinton said Ashton is preparing a response to Jalili on behalf of the

P5+1, but said "the burden remains on Iran to demonstrate it is prepared to end its stalling tactics, drop its unacceptable preconditions and start addressing the international community's concerns."

Ashton said she received Jalili's correspondence three months after she had sent a letter calling for further discussions.

"I had wished for a stronger and better letter from them to recognize that the offer on the table is an offer they should look at very carefully. I will be sending a reply," she said, adding "I would like to say there will be a new round of talks. From the letter that I've received, I don't see that at the present time."

Secretary Clinton Looking to Americans for Help in Their Home Countries

By Jeff Baron
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. government is recognizing the work of millions of its residents on behalf of the countries of their grandparents — and asking them to do more.

"We believe that one of the great strengths of America is our diversity. And we want to celebrate it, but more important than that, we want to put it to work," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in opening the State Department's first Global Diaspora Forum May 17.

"The truth is that it's not possible for any government, no matter how well-meaning, to meet the challenges we face, from natural disasters to economic stagnation to poverty or civil unrest," Clinton said. "Therefore, we need what I call smart power, and that means employing every tool at our disposal.

"And, yes, we have a very strong force in our organized diplomatic efforts, our development professionals and certainly our defense establishment. But I think building these coalitions, spurring initiative and innovation around the world, using people-to-people exchanges, is actually the core of smart power."

Clinton said that more than 60 million Americans are first- or second-generation members of diaspora groups. The money they send to the countries from which their families came "dwarfs any foreign aid that our government can give." One goal of the three-day forum is to show how that money can support investments that will help whole communities rather than just their extended families.

The forum includes sessions with development officials, philanthropic organizations, public-health experts, high-tech entrepreneurs and others who connect Americans

with developing countries.

Clinton credited diaspora groups with diplomacy as well. She cited the importance of Irish Americans in fostering the peace process in Northern Ireland, and in investing there to help make Northern Ireland prosperous.

She also noted the work of the American Pakistan Foundation and the newly created Mexican American Leadership Initiative, which she said "encourages Mexican Americans to engage more deeply with Mexico on a full range of issues, from the terrible security challenges that plague certain parts of the country to opening up more doors of opportunity for the poor, for those who are looking to start businesses, to be entrepreneurs."

The forum, she said, will bring people together, help launch new projects and provide technical assistance and training to leaders of diaspora groups.

Clinton also encouraged diaspora leaders to teach the political skills they have developed in the United States to people in emerging democracies who "don't know the first thing about politics."

"The United States will not dictate what people organize around. There are different positions that can be taken," Clinton said. "But we believe strongly that if there is not vigorous political involvement, a lot of these movements will be hijacked, because too many people who rhetorically pledge themselves to democracy believe in one election, one time."

U.S.-India Ties Are Strong and Growing, Diplomat Says

By Jeff Baron
Staff Writer

Washington — A top U.S. diplomat says the United States and India are becoming closer and closer as partners in technology, development, security and trade.

"India and the U.S. have the potential to be each other's largest trade and investment partners, demonstrating significant, balanced benefits for both economies and peoples," said Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake, who oversees South and Central Asian affairs.

Blake told a think-tank audience May 13 that, with bipartisan support in both countries, the world's two largest democracies have made "significant and uninterrupted progress over the last decade" on their common concerns. The two are also creating the architecture for further progress, he said.

Blake, a former deputy chief of the U.S. mission in New

Delhi, offered a lengthy catalogue of cooperation between the two countries. He said that India's fast-growing economy requires fast-growing and diversified power sources. The two countries "are working together across a full portfolio of energy options, especially clean solutions," he said.

"The U.S.-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy, known as PACE, will improve energy access and promote low-carbon growth through the research and deployment of clean energy technologies," he said. In addition, a Joint Clean Energy Research and Development Center is in the works with as much as \$100 million in public and private-sector funds.

Other areas in which cooperation has taken off include space. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is working with the Indian Ministry of Earth and Sciences to use satellite imagery in forecasting monsoons and helping Indians plan their crops.

Blake also noted the security ties that have grown between the United States and India, which he said play a vital and growing role in upholding the rule of law internationally. He said the two countries' militaries should work together more at the planning level, and he especially urged India to take a greater security role in East Asia. He also lamented India's decision not to buy its next generation of fighter aircraft from U.S. companies.

Blake praised India's efforts at building peace, with aid to Afghanistan and increased dialogue with longtime rival Pakistan.

"India's economic rise presents an enormous opportunity for Pakistan, and the normalization of economic ties could provide immense benefits to millions of entrepreneurs, farmers and businesspeople in both countries," he said. "More critically, a bilateral breakthrough could provide a catalyst for wider regional economic integration, a transformative goal we all wish realized."

Blake also highlighted growing people-to-people exchanges between India and the United States, including the number of work visas issued for Indians. He said trade and investment between the two countries are growing but should be greater still. That increase can happen if the two countries work out a bilateral investment treaty, he said.

Blake urged India to make life easier for foreign companies interested in the Indian market. He said India ranks 134 out of 183 on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index.

"As India's economic reform proceeds — however slowly — in the future, I have no doubt it will expand the space

for greater U.S. trade and investment,” he said.

U.S. Firmly Committed to Global Economic Development Group

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will chair the upcoming Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ministerial meetings, which mark the group’s 50th anniversary, the State Department announced.

Clinton hopes “to underscore the U.S. commitment to the OECD,” according to a senior State Department official.

“The United States is proud to be a partner with the OECD as we celebrate this milestone anniversary,” said Under Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs Robert Hormats during a press briefing May 17.

He said the OECD has proven itself a “critical partner in advancing prosperity” around the world by setting competitive standards and employing best economic practices.

“The OECD works to advance prosperity and economic development among its members and throughout the global economy,” Hormats said, adding that “economic development is directly connected to promoting peace and stability” around the world.

The under secretary and OECD Deputy Secretary-General Richard Boucher spoke to reporters at a joint briefing in Washington to discuss the agenda for the May 25–26 ministerial meetings.

Hormats said talks will focus on trade, employment, development and environmentally friendly growth practices. Boucher said the group also plans to examine gender issues and to release an interim report on “how women can be empowered through education, entrepreneurship and economic activity.”

Hormats and Boucher praised the United States’ strong engagement with the OECD.

“America’s commitment is one that has endured and remained strong for the whole 50 years of the existence of the OECD,” Hormats said. He added that the United States contributes nearly \$100 million annually to the organization.

“We’re very proud of the work that Americans in government, business and labor have done in contributing to the OECD’s mission through our

participation in its bodies, research and projects,” Hormats said.

He said the group was established in an effort to fulfill the vision of Europe “free, economically secure and at peace.” Hormats said the anniversary ministerial “will celebrate the success of that vision.”

The meetings also will mark the organization’s development as a worldwide network of 34 member countries, Hormats said. Boucher added that key partners China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia also will participate in the talks, as will Russia, which is working toward accession to the OECD.

Clinton will lead the U.S. delegation in Paris, where the OECD is based. She will be joined by USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, and Austan Goolsbee, chair of the President’s Council of Economic Advisers.

The OECD expects that more than 60 foreign ministers and 15 heads of state will attend.

Digitally Born Democracy

By Philip N. Howard

Philip N. Howard is an associate professor at the University of Washington. He is the author of The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Information Technology and Political Islam (Oxford, 2010).

Protesters in Tunisia and Egypt used their fingers to toss out their dictators. Zine el Abidine Ben Ali ruled Tunisia for more than 20 years, and Hosni Mubarak reigned in Egypt more than 30 years. Yet the most effective challenge to their respective regimes has come not from gun-toting terrorists but from digitally enabled 20- and 30-year-olds.

In the first three months of 2011, discontent has cascaded over digital transnational networks of family and friends from Algeria to Yemen. This “Arab Spring” was not fomented by traditional political actors like trade unions, political parties or radical fundamentalists. It blossomed from social and familial networks of ordinary citizens, many of whom had never been politically active before: young entrepreneurs, government workers and the urban middle class. Because digital media allow people to share grievances, exchange information and organize into factions without face-to-face contact—and without being easily traced by governments—they are proving an effective and highly flexible tool for mobilizing against authoritarian states.

The groups that initiated and sustained protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and Libya have few meaningful experiences with public deliberation or

voting, and little experience with successful protesting. Even so, these young activists are politically disciplined, pragmatic and collaborative. Where do young people who grow up in entrenched authoritarian regimes get political aspirations? How do they learn about political life in countries where faith and freedom coexist? The answer, for the most part, is online.

Digital Media As Classroom –and Teacher

The Internet has altered the dynamics of political communication. In many countries, the Internet itself is the site of political contestation between the state and civil society, and between contending movements such as secularism and Islamism. The virtual communities that take root after many large public demonstrations are almost always independent of state control, though they can be monitored and manipulated by the state. And over time, more citizens are learning to use the Internet, developing their online search skills, and becoming more sophisticated in their consumption of information.

What lasts are the virtual ties between a nation's civic groups, and between international nongovernmental organizations and like-minded, in-country organizations. Certainly not all of these communities are about politics, but their existence is a political phenomenon, particularly in countries where state and social elites have worked hard to police offline communities. Thus, even a bulletin board or chat room dedicated to shopping can be a site that practices free speech and where the defense of free speech is a topic of conversation.

Even in nations ruled by the most authoritarian regimes, the Internet allows externally based opposition movements to reach in and join the political conversation. If political parties are banned, political opposition organizes online, from outside the country. Civil society leaders similarly turn to other organizational forms empowered by network technologies. Individual citizens document human rights abuses with their mobile phones, use shared spreadsheets to track state expenditures, and pool information about official corruption. For example, opposition parties in Egypt, long banned from formal participation in elections, organized very effectively using digital media services hosted in London. In recent years, some of the most effective critics of governments in Tunisia and Egypt came from each country's blogging community. In Egypt, bloggers based in Cairo and abroad organized several significant street protests over the last two years, and had a crucial role in the early days of organizing events in Tahrir Square. In Tunisia, a network of activists put together a short documentary about how the president's wife used the state airplane for her shopping trips. Using photos of the plane taking off and landing from Europe's main shopping cities – with one passenger – the video circulated widely among Tunisia's

civil society leaders, undermining the president's credibility and feeding impressions of corruption. While the state media would not cover the early days of social unrest in Tunis, photos and videos circulated broadly across digital networks of family and friends.

Digital media such as mobile phones and the Internet now help incubate civic conversations, especially in countries where the national print and broadcast media are heavily censored. Appeals from friends and family have long drawn people into the streets to protest and potentially face tear gas and rubber bullets. Today, these appeals come over digital networks. They take many forms, from videos documenting police abuse to tweets naming a time and place. The individual decision to take political risks still depends on compelling appeals to action. But increasingly, these appeals come over digital media.

Networks and Democracy

Some governments work hard to censor digital media, but even in these countries the Internet is hard to control. Governments might own nodes in the network, but rarely can they completely choke off network connections. Platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and email – content distribution systems largely independent of the state – afford civil society groups invaluable organization and communication tools. They have become an important incubator for social movements and can be used by citizens to establish connections and coalitions that lay the groundwork for democracy.

Digital media often help citizens in fledgling democracies deepen and improve their civil society institutions. Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey all recently held successful elections (according to most observers). Political campaigns employed digital media to introduce new forms of political communication with supporters. At the same time, Islamist parties in these Muslim majority nations had to moderate their message in order to effectively compete in this new media environment. While these countries have diverse histories, their political cultures share certain characteristics today:

- Citizens consume news from international sources.
- Family and friends use communication networks largely independent of the state.
- Civil society actors have flourished online even during domestic state crackdowns.
- Women are drawn into civic discourse about personal politics and public policy online in ways they sometimes cannot do in public spaces.
- Young people increasingly develop their political identity online, where cohorts of urban, tech-savvy youth encounter international news sources, converse with

friends and family living in other countries, and even debate over interpretations of spiritual texts.

- The domestic media environment has experienced significant changes.

Twitter, blogs and YouTube do not cause social unrest. But today, successful social movement organizing and civic engagement is difficult to imagine without them, even in countries like Iran and Egypt. Many people in these countries have no Internet or mobile phone access. But the people who do — urban dwellers, educated elites and the young — are precisely the populations that either spark regime change or back dictators. These citizens — the ones for whom connections to family and friends are increasingly maintained through digital technology — are precisely those who support or defect from authoritarian rule. It is these citizens who started the uprisings in Tunis, Cairo and other regional capitals.

When the protests are over, the habits of new media remain. Elections have become sensitive moments in which student leaders, journalists and civil society groups experiment with digital technologies. Even if their favorite candidates are not elected, the process of experimentation spurs information habits that can be difficult for states to control. Citizens learn about alternative news sources on the Internet and develop a better sense of how to evaluate the credibility of information that comes to them by SMS.

A Digital Habit: Consumers Are Producers

From studying recent protests and other sensitive moments such as rigged elections or military crises, we know that mobile phones, the Internet and other digital tools have two important roles in political communication. First, technology users display unusually high levels of trust and reciprocity in times of crisis. Technology users are likely to share images, help each other stay in touch with family and friends, and supply information from the ground to outsiders. Second, civil society groups often copy each other's digital campaign strategies. This is in part because elections attract democratic activists who travel from country to country and help local groups. But elections also provide an opportunity for domestic groups to learn about each other's strategies for getting ideas out to the public.

Most importantly, digital media provide an infrastructure for debate that can live beyond any particular political protest or scandal. Acts of protest and civil disobedience become moments when significant portions of the public learn how to use digital media for political ends. People get used to being able to consume and produce political content. They get used to digital storytelling. And we are already seeing that in Tunisia and Egypt, constitution building is becoming a digitally mediated process too.

By enabling the average citizen to create content and generate networks with whom they share content, digital media gives a voice to the disenfranchised. In the Arab Spring of 2011, information infrastructure *is* politics.

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